

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: FY04 Army National Guard, Education Program (Policy Number, 04-01)

1. REFERENCES.

- a. United States Code (USC), Section 2007, Payment of Tuition for Off-Duty Training or Education.
- b. Department of Defense Directive 1322.8, Voluntary Education Programs for Military Personnel.
- c. Department of Defense Instruction 1322.25, Voluntary Education Programs for Military Personnel.
- d. AR 621-5, 17 Nov 93, Subject: Army Continuing Education System.

2. PURPOSE. This memorandum establishes policy to administer the ARNG Education Program unless sooner rescinded or superceded. The program includes ARNG Federal Tuition Assistance (FTA), and various education support programs such as the ARNG Education Support Center (ESC), the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES), the Service-members Opportunity Colleges (SOC), and Army/American Council of Education Registry Transcript System (AARTS). The Montgomery G.I Bill Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR) Kicker Program is covered under a separate policy.

3. IMPLEMENTATION. The ARNG Education Program is developed based on guidance provided by the Department of the Army and the Army Continuing Education System (ACES). Education Services Officers (ESOs) will follow AR 621-5 and this policy to implement the ARNG Education Program.

4. ARNG FTA OVERVIEW. Financial assistance through ARNG FTA will be provided for voluntary off-duty education programs in support of a soldier's professional or personal self-development goals per the following guidance.

a. Eligibility.

(1) ARNG Traditional Soldiers. ARNG traditional soldiers in an active drilling status who are coded as a 'satisfactory participant' are eligible to receive ARNG FTA. In addition, ARNG traditional soldiers who are federally mobilized or serving on Active Duty (i.e. ADSW, ADT, etc...) who are denied TA due to funding limitations through their servicing Army Education Center are also eligible to receive ARNG FTA.

(2) ARNG AGR Soldiers. ARNG AGR soldiers (Title 10/32) are not eligible to receive ARNG FTA. AGR soldiers are eligible for TA through their servicing Army Education Center.

(3) ARNG Civilians. ARNG Civilians (Federal or State) are not eligible to receive ARNG FTA.

b. Authorized Uses/Accreditation. ARNG FTA will only be used to pay for courses offered by institutions that are accredited or that have been approved as a candidate for accreditation by a national or regional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE). For non-degree bearing programs, secondary school accreditation or specialized accreditation (professional/occupational) is required. This requirement is applicable to classroom study, vocational/technical training and distance learning (DL) courses.

(1) ESOs will determine which colleges/universities are accredited per the US Department of Education.

(2) A sample listing of accredited DL courses can be found by reviewing the DANTES Independent Study Catalog, DANTES External Degree Catalog, or the DANTES Nationally Accredited Distance Learning Programs Catalog which are distributed annually to each State ESO by DANTES. The catalogs are also available on line at the DANTES Web site at: <http://www.voled.doded.mil>.

c. Authorized Levels. Soldiers may use ARNG FTA to receive one credential from each of the following levels.

- (1) Secondary School Diploma or its equivalency
- (2) Certificate (undergraduate, graduate, vocational, technical, licensure)
- (3) Associate
- (4) Baccalaureate

(5) Master's or First Professional

Note. Only soldiers who have not obtained a master degree are eligible to use ARNG FTA for a first professional degree. Examples of first professional degrees include Architecture, Certified Public Accountant, Podiatry (D.P.M.), Dentistry (D.D.S. or D.M.D), Medicine (M.D.), Optometry (O.D.), Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.), Pharmacy (D. Phar.), Law (J.D.), and Theology (M.Div or M.H.L.).

d. Authorized Rates. The following ARNG FTA rates are authorized for FY04.

(1) Up to 75 percent tuition, up to \$200 per semester hour (SH) or \$133 per quarter hour (QH). As an exception, ESOs may authorize up to 100 percent of the costs associated with obtaining a high school diploma or its equivalent.

(2) Up to 75 percent of authorized fees not to exceed \$500 per fiscal year. Authorized fees are only those fees charged by the institution that are a requirement to 'all students' for enrollment purposes or are directly related to the instruction of the course for which ARNG FTA is being provided. ARNG FTA will not be used for the purchase of textbooks unless they are included in the institution's published tuition rate.

(3) The total amount of ARNG FTA (tuition and fees) each soldier is entitled to receive during FY04 will not exceed \$4,000.

(4) Traditional ARNG officers who are serving on federal active duty under Title 10 USC, (i.e. Mobilization, CO-TTAD, ADT, etc...) and denied Army Continuation Education System (ACES), are entitled to ARNG FTA at the ARNG FTA rate. In addition, ARNG enlisted soldiers who are serving on federal active duty under Title 10, USC and are denied TA due to "lack of funding" by their respective servicing Army Education Center, are also entitled to ARNG FTA at the ARNG FTA rate.

e. Goal Declaration. ARNG soldiers must declare an educational goal (i.e. degree, credential, certification or licensure) before ARNG FTA can be approved.

5. ARNG FTA ADMINISTRATION. The ARNG FTA Program is an 'up front' TA program. Under this program, either the State FTA Manager or the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) makes a payment directly to the college/institution for the ARNG's portion of the soldier's tuition cost. ESOs will establish an 'up front' payment system with the financial aid personnel at their colleges/universities in order to prevent soldiers from having to pay tuition costs on their own and receiving reimbursement later. Under extenuating circumstances, soldiers may be authorized by the ESO to be directly reimbursed. Cases of direct reimbursement will be annotated in the comment section of the Information Management and Reporting Center (iMARC).

a. Service Commitment.

(1) Enlisted soldiers and warrant officers must have sufficient time remaining before their current service obligation/Expiration Term of Service to complete the course unless involuntarily separated with an honorable discharge.

(2) Commissioned officers must have at least 4 years of Selected Reserve service remaining from the date of completion of the course for which TA is provided.

b. Forms. The following forms will be used for the administration of ARNG FTA.

(1) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) – College. ESOs are encouraged to develop an MOU with each of the local schools to which soldiers apply for and receive ARNG FTA. The MOU will outline the ESOs' and the Schools' responsibilities regarding enrollment/disenrollment notification, duplicate federal funding, student grades, payment procedures, etc. In addition, ESOs will develop working relationships with the educational institutions that receive ARNG FTA, i.e. Admission Counselors, Financial Aid Counselors, Department of Veterans Affairs representatives. The ARNG Education Support Center or SOCGuard will provide assistance in establishing MOUs.

(2) Statement of Understanding (SOU) – Soldier. Prior to any commitment of funds, the ESO will ensure the soldier understands his/her responsibilities regarding ARNG FTA as well as the restrictions regarding the duplication of federal funding by signing a statement of understanding each fiscal year.

(3) DA Form 2171-E. The DA Form 2171-E, Request for Tuition Assistance Army Continuing Education System (horizontal version) serves as a contract between the government and the institution and is the only form authorized for the administration of the ARNG FTA program. ESOs will only approve 2171's that are received prior to the end of the institution's late registration period or the beginning of the course, whichever is most advantageous to the soldier, but not earlier than 90 days prior to the course start date. In addition, each DA Form 2171-E must include a control number using the following format; Four Digit DANTES ID number (if centralized), "T" indicating Tuition Assistance program, two digit fiscal year, 2 digit month, and a four digit sequence number, followed by a two letter State abbreviation, i.e. 3401-T04100001KY.

(4) DA Form 669. To ensure accurate record keeping, each ESO will initiate and maintain a DA Form 669 (ACES Education Record) on each soldier that applies for and receives ARNG FTA.

c. Payment Processing. ESOs are responsible for managing the allocation of ARNG FTA funds by inputting each request for ARNG FTA into the Information Management and Reporting Center (iMARC) System. Use of the iMARC system to administer, manage and report ARNG FTA information is a mandatory requirement. Specific payment processes for centralized and non-centralized states are as follows:

(1) Centralized States. Centralized states will process FTA requests by submitting a signed copy of the completed DA Form 2171-E to DANTES at the following address: DANTES, Code 20J, 6490 Saufley Field Road, Pensacola, FL 32509. ESO's will ensure invoices are sent to DANTES from schools. The following States will be centralized in FY04: AK, AL, AR, AZ, DC, FL, GU, HI, IN, KS, KY, MD, MI, MN, MO, MS, NC, ND, NM, OH, OR, PR, SC, SD, TN, VA, VI, WV.

(2) Non-Centralized States. Non centralized states will process FTA requests by paying the request via a government authorized credit card or by submitting a copy of the completed DA Form 2171-E and the school invoice to their respective USP&FO. The following States will be non-centralized in FY04: CA, CO, CT, DE, GA, IA, ID, IL, LA, MA, ME, MT, NE, NH, NJ, NV, NY, OK, PA, RI, TX, UT, VT, WA, WI, WY.

(3) Distance Learning (DL). All requests for DL TA will no longer be funded separately by DANTES but will be paid using the ARNG FTA funds allocated to each State/Territory. To process a request for ARNG FTA via DL, ESOs will ensure DL is indicated as the delivery method in block I of the DA Form 2171-E and process the request according to the procedures indicated above as a centralized or non centralized State. In addition, all requests for ARNG FTA via DL (regardless of course length) will be handled as an 'up front' request using the DA Form 2171-E. The DANTES Form 1562 will no longer be used for DL requests.

(4) Clock Hours (CH). CHs for vocational/technical training courses offered by accredited post secondary institutions. To fund a course according to CHs, ESOs must convert CHs to SHs by dividing the total number of CHs by 15 to determine the number of SHs and then dividing the cost of the course by the number of SHs to determine the cost per SH. For example, a Microsoft Office Training Course offered by an accredited institution that costs \$1,800 and meets for 120 CHs would equal 8 SH (120/15) and cost \$225 per SH (1800/8).

d. Recoupment. Soldiers are responsible for submitting grades within 30 days after course completion. ESOs are responsible for verifying the course completion status by receipt of an official grade report. Those soldiers who receive a failing grade or don't complete the course will have their funding recouped and future ARNG FTA is suspended, unless there are extenuating circumstances due to no fault of the soldier. In the case of centralized States, this recoupment process will be facilitated by DANTES.

(1) ESOs will recoup 100% of the ARNG FTA funds provided to soldiers who are discharged prior to completing Initial Active Duty for Training (IADT).

(2) Commissioned officers who fail to complete the required 4 year obligation will be required to reimburse the amount of TA according to the following formula; Amount of TA divided by 48, multiplied by the remaining amount of obligation. For example, an officer receives \$563 in ARNG FTA but departs 24 months before completion of the four-year obligation. $\$563/48 = 11.73 \times 24 = \282 to be recouped.

6. ARNG FTA FUNDING. ESOs will receive their annual funding plan (AFP) information via the administration center in iMARC. ARNG FTA funds for centralized States will be sent to DANTES. ARNG FTA funds for non-centralized States will be sent to each State USPFO from NGB. States may request additional funding by submitting a request to the ARNG FTA manager at NGB. Course start date will determine which FY funds are obligated (i.e a course start date of 15 Sep 03 will obligate funds from FY03. A course start date of 15 Oct 03 will obligate funds from FY04). States will receive funding for their FTA program based on historical and projected use as well as accountability in iMARC.

a. Priority of Funds. ESOs are reminded that the ARNG FTA Program is based on the availability of funds and cannot be guaranteed to all soldiers. Using the guidelines established in AR 621-5, paragraph 2-10, ESOs will establish a priority of funding to help them achieve and maintain the highest state of personnel readiness in their state.

b. Purchase of Education Related Items and Equipment. Centralized States can request up to \$3500 in additional funds to purchase education related items/resources. Each State will be limited to one request per FY. These requests must be submitted to the ARNG FTA manager at NGB. Non-centralized States may use up to \$3500 of their FTA for this same purpose. Non-centralized must account for these expenses by submitting a memorandum to the ARNG FTA manager at NGB, NLT 01 September each FY.

c. Duplicate Sources of Funding. Soldiers may use other funding sources in addition to ARNG FTA (i.e. Pell Grants, Montgomery GI Bill, State TA, etc) to pursue their college work based on the following limitations:

(1) State TA and the MGIB (active duty or selected reserve) may be used simultaneously for the same course and exceed 100 percent of the tuition costs.

(2) ARNG FTA and State TA programs can be used simultaneously for the same course. Whenever possible, ESOs will ensure that the State TA program is applied first and then the ARNG FTA program is applied against any remaining obligation; not to exceed 100 percent of tuition costs.

(3) MGIB Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR), Chapter 1606, basic benefit, MGIB Kicker incentive and ARNG FTA may be combined when a soldier is enrolled in the MGIB-SR at least “Half (1/2) Time” or more (Three Quarter (3/4) or Full Time). ARNG FTA and the MGIB-SR may be combined and exceed 100 percent of tuition costs.

(4) Traditional drilling soldiers eligible for both MGIB-AD and ARNG Federal TA may receive both simultaneously for the same course. They may exceed 100 percent of tuition costs provided they have not contracted for a MGIB Kicker. Soldiers eligible to receive the MGIB-AD, VEAP or DEA who have contracted for a MGIB Kicker may only use ARNG FTA for course(s) that are beyond what is considered fulltime enrollment by the school.

(5) In the case where a soldier is eligible for both TA and a Pell Grant, ARNG FTA will be applied first to allow maximum use of Pell Grant funds.

(6) ARNG soldiers who are serving on federal active duty under Title 10, USC, are not eligible to receive simultaneous TA (ARNG FTA or ACES TA) and MGIB-SR benefits. However, these soldiers are eligible to receive simultaneous TA (ARNG FTA or ACES TA) and MGIB-AD benefits through the “TOP UP” program – combined payments may not exceed 100% of the cost of the course.

7. EDUCATION SUPPORT AGENCIES. The following education support programs are available to assist ARNG soldiers in their educational pursuits.

a. ARNG Education Support Center (ESC). This program is currently established at PEC. The ESC provides education counseling, degree planning, and outreach support.

b. DANTES. DANTES provides testing opportunities and certification exams to help soldiers gain additional college credit and credentials. Information on available tests and exams is located on line at; <http://www.voled.doded.mil> or by calling the DANTES education hot line at 1-800-482-4533.

c. SOC. SOC (a consortium of over 1,600 colleges/universities) is our primary military liaison to the education community and provides various educational assistance programs for servicemembers. Information on current SOC programs is available on line at; <http://www.soc.aascu.org>, by phone at; 1-800-368-5622 or by Email at; socguard@aascu.org.

d. Military Transcript Services. To help eliminate the duplication of credit, soldiers that have completed any military training are encouraged to obtain a copy of their military transcripts through the Army/American Counsel of Education Registry Transcript System (AARTS) available at <http://aarts.army.mil>.

8. POINT OF CONTACT. POC for the MA ARNG Education Program is the Education Services Office at DSN: 256-6652 or Toll-free (888) 301-3103 ext. 6652 or email at education@ma.ngb.army.mil.

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(Name withheld for security reasons)

COL, GS

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